

In the claims:

1. (currently amended) A method for distributing customer contacts to a selected one of a plurality of transaction processing entities each capable of handling a plurality of media types in a transaction processing system, such method comprising:

determining a media type for a customer contact in the transaction processing system, the media type determined by the access channel of the customer contact;

identifying the media type as exclusive or nonexclusive;

finding a transaction processing entity that is capable of handling the media type;

establishing a table of a predetermined maximum number of customer contacts of each media type that may be simultaneously handled by each transaction processing entity, and of current customer contact assignments to each transaction entity for each media type;

routing the customer contact to a transaction processing entity that is capable of handling the media type as a current customer contact if the contact will not exceed the maximum number of media type that the transaction processing entity may handle, and permitting no further customer contacts for the duration of said current customer contact by said transaction processing entity when said media type is exclusive ~~and, otherwise~~ while routing other non-exclusive customer contacts to the transaction processing entity during the current customer contact.

2. (original) The method of claim 1 wherein determining a media type further comprises determining a source of the customer contact.

3. (original) The method of claim 2 wherein the source is an access channel comprising at least one of a telephone, Internet, radio, cellular, satellite, cable, facsimile, email, web and video.

4. (original) The method of claim 1 wherein the media type further comprises a priority level specifying the order in which the customer contacts are to be processed by the transaction processing entity.

5. (canceled)

6. (original) The method of claim 1 wherein the transaction processing entity comprises at least one of an agent, an agent station, a console, a terminal, and an interactive voice response unit.

7. (previously presented) The method of claim 1 wherein finding a transaction processing entity further comprises:

finding a transaction processing entity that is not handling an exclusive media type;

determining a metric of how many customer contacts of non-exclusive media type have been assigned to the transaction processing entity; and

comparing the metric to a threshold relating to a maximum number of customer contacts of the media type that the transaction processing entity may handle, and when the metric exceeds the threshold, preferentially routing customer contacts to another transaction processing entity.

8. (original) The method of claim 7 wherein finding a transaction processing entity further comprises searching a transaction routing table for a transaction processing entity that is processing a nonexclusive media type.

9. (original) The method of claim 1 further comprising using a transaction routing table to list assigned customer contacts to transaction processing entities.

10. (original) The method of claim 9 wherein the transaction routing table is updated once a customer contact has been routed to the transaction processing entity that is capable of handling the media type.

11. (original) The method of claim 1 wherein routing the customer contact further comprises connecting the customer contact to the transaction processing entity that is capable of handling the media type.

12. (original) The method of claim 11 wherein connecting is performed by a matrix switch of an automatic call distributor.

13. (currently amended) A method for distributing customer contacts to a selected one of a plurality of transaction processing entities each capable of handling a plurality of media types in a transaction processing system, such method comprising:

determining a media type for a customer contact in the transaction processing system, the media type determined by the access channel of the customer contact;

identifying the media type as exclusive or nonexclusive;

preparing a transaction routing table of transaction processing entities based on media types ~~and including~~ whether the media types are exclusive or nonexclusive, a maximum number of customer contacts of each media type that each transaction processing entity may handle simultaneously;

searching the transaction routing table for a transaction processing entity that is capable of handling the media type;

determining a metric of how many customer contacts of the media type have been assigned to the transaction processing entity; and

comparing the metric to ~~a the threshold relating to a~~ maximum number of customer contacts of the media type that the transaction processing entity may handle simultaneously, and when the metric exceeds the threshold, preferentially routing other customer contacts to other transaction processing entities; and

routing the customer contact to the transaction processing entity that is capable of handling the media type as a current customer contact and permitting no further customer contact of the ~~exclusion-exclusive~~ media type for the duration of ~~when the current~~ customer contact while ~~and, otherwise,~~ routing other non-exclusive customer contact so long as the metric does not exceed the threshold.

14. (original) The method of claim 13 wherein the capable transaction processing entity comprises an agent station that is equipped with the necessary hardware to handle the media type.
15. (original) The method of claim 14 wherein necessary hardware comprises interfaces to a Internet, cable television, radio, satellite, and a telephone system.
16. (original) The method of claim 13 wherein determining a media type further comprises determining a source of the customer contact.
17. (previously presented) The method of claim 16 wherein the source is an access channel comprising at least one of a telephone, Internet, radio, cellular, satellite, cable, facsimile, email, web and video.
18. (original) The method of claim 13 wherein the transaction processing entity comprises at least one of an agent, an agent station, a console, a terminal, and an interactive voice response unit.
19. (previously present) The method of claim 13 further comprising using the transaction routing table to list assigned customer contacts to transaction processing entities and to list a maximum number of customer contacts of each media type permitted for each transaction processing entity.
20. (original) The method of claim 19 wherein the transaction routing table is updated once a customer contact has been routed to the transaction processing entity that is capable of handling the media type.
21. (currently amended) A method for distributing customer contacts to a selected one of a plurality of transaction processing entities each capable of handling a plurality of media types in a transaction processing system, such method comprising:

determining a media type for a customer contact in the transaction processing system, the media type determined by the access channel of the customer contact;

identifying the media type as exclusive or nonexclusive;

preparing a transaction routing table of transaction processing entities based on media types including current processing assignments for each transaction processing entity, and a maximum number of assignments of each transaction type that each entity may simultaneously handle;

searching the transaction routing table for a transaction processing entity that is processing a nonexclusive media type;

searching the transaction routing table for a transaction processing entity that is capable of handling the media type;

determining a metric of how many customer contacts of the media type have been assigned to the transaction processing entity;

comparing the metric to a threshold relating to a maximum number of customer contacts of the media type that the transaction processing entity may handle, and when the metric exceeds the threshold, preferentially routing other customer contacts to other transaction processing entities; and

when the media type is nonexclusive and the metric does not exceed the threshold, routing the customer contact to the transaction processing entity handling a ~~nonexclusive~~-media type that is capable of handling the media type;

when the media type is exclusive and the metric does not exceed the threshold, routing the customer contact to the transaction processing entity, when the transaction processing entity is not currently handling another exclusive media type customer contact.

22. (currently amended) A system for distributing customer contacts to a selected one of a plurality of transaction processing entities each capable of handling a plurality of media types in a transaction processing system comprising:

means for determining a media type for a customer contact in the transaction processing system, the media type determined by the access channel of the customer contact;

means for identifying a media type as exclusive or nonexclusive;

means for finding a transaction processing entity that is capable of handling the media type;

means for determining a metric of how many customer contacts of the media type have been assigned to the transaction processing entity; and

means for comparing the metric to a threshold relating to a maximum number of customer contacts of the media type that the transaction processing entity may handle simultaneously, and when the metric exceeds the threshold, preferentially routing other customer contacts to another transaction processing entity;

means for routing the customer contact to a transaction processing entity that is capable of handling the media type as a current customer contact so long as the metric does not exceed the threshold; and

means for permitting no further customer contacts of exclusive media type while the transaction processing entity is servicing said current customer contact when said current customer media type is exclusive while permitting further contacts of non-exclusive media type during said exclusive current customer contact.

23. (original) The system of claim 22 wherein the means for determining a media type further comprises means for determining a source of the customer contact.

24. (original) The system of claim 23 wherein the source is an access channel comprising at least one of a telephone, Internet, radio, cellular, satellite, cable, facsimile, email, web and video.

25. (original) The system of claim 22 wherein the media type further comprises a priority level specifying the order in which the customer contacts are to be processed by the transaction processing entity.

26. (canceled)

27. (original) The system of claim 22 wherein the transaction processing entity comprises at least one of an agent, an agent station, a console, a terminal, and an interactive voice response unit.
28. (original) The system of claim 22, wherein the means for finding a transaction processing entity further comprises:
- means for finding a transaction processing entity that is not handling an exclusive media type;
 - means for determining a metric of how many customer contacts of the media type have been assigned to the transaction processing entity; and
 - means for comparing the metric to a threshold relating to the maximum number of customer contacts of the media type that the transaction processing entity may handle, and when the metric exceeds the threshold, preferentially routing customer contacts to another transaction processing entity.
29. (original) The system of claim 28 wherein the means for finding a transaction processing entity further comprises means for searching a transaction routing table for a transaction processing entity that is processing a nonexclusive media type.
30. (original) The system of claim 22 further comprising a transaction routing table to list assigned customer contacts to transaction processing entities.
31. (original) The system of claim 30 further comprising means for updating the transaction routing table once a customer contact has been routed to the transaction entity that is capable of handling the media type.
32. (original) The system of claim 22 further comprising means for connecting the customer contact to the transaction processing entity that is capable of handling the media type.

33. (original) The system of claim 32 wherein the means for connecting comprises a matrix switch of an automatic call distributor.

34-39. (canceled)